

listened to the famous gravelly voice—holding court—all the while trying to muster up the nerve to talk to her. I needed her advice about the editorial plan I had for *Homemaker's Magazine*. But asking to speak to her was, for me, akin to butting in on Mick Jagger or Queen Elizabeth. At last, I screwed up the courage and said, “Doris, I wonder if we could talk some time about *Homemaker's*.” In her famous drawl she replied immediately, “Sure Saaally, I’d like that. Let’s have lunch tomorrow.” That was the thing about Doris. She always had time, never let you feel you were interrupting her busy schedule and always listened thoughtfully and replied fulsomely. For the next 19 years she was there for me as a mentor and a dear friend in good times and bad. The lesson she taught me about magazines was this: if you have the readers, you can follow your editorial dream. The publisher won’t stop you because the reader numbers will bring in the advertisements and that, at the end of the day, is what the proprietor wants. “Just do it,” she said, and added in her delightful tongue-in-cheek hyperbole, “It’ll be faaabulous.”

She had a way of pushing you forward and drawing you in when she had a plan that required editorial support. I remember walking with her on the beach at her cottage in Prince Edward Island, marveling at the sea and the sand, basking in the sunshine, and commenting about how lucky we both were to have cottages in the Maritimes. I no sooner formed the thought about how pensive and spiritual she was about our surroundings when she said in her vintage-Doris style, “Saaally, someone’s got to raise more hell about proportional representation.”

The package that was Doris Anderson also included compassion, understanding, and the gift of knowing. If you were in trouble, she would be there emitting that strength of hers, bathing you in her powerful support and holding you steady until you found your feet, which she expected you to find in due course.

I can see her yet, standing tall, chin tucked in, hands with beautifully manicured fingernails folded low, her face full of observation and that knowing. What a dame. What a gift she was to Canada.

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SYLVIA SPRING

Doris Poem

Things I learned from her:
Being a little nobody with more chutzpa
than smarts
Meant little to her
She talked to me as an equal
At first it was about strategies
Hers but by inference mine
For navigating the mine field of male
Privilege and female savvy

How to handle them
Or not when they asked for the unacceptable
How pretense was part of the game
I called it chutzpa, she – getting the job done
Other lessons during our stint together on
a task force
The advertising & media boys trying to
demonize
Feminism – they failed and we
Developed a fine feminist humour
A legacy – our legacy for survival

But she has left us
And the struggle is not over
Nor her influence on my and Canadian
Women’s lives...
She made sure of that when she walked
Out on Lloyd and the boys that fateful day
Back when we were all trying to find
the humour
In being un-personed

By supporting her those days I gained a
new respect
For integrity in the face of huge personal risk
And I lost an old “friend” who called
me traitor
But we all survived and became “personed”
On valentine’s day ... what humour in
that irony
What a woman
What a friend
What a mentor
What a farewell celebration!

Sylvia Spring is a life long communication through many mediums – radio, films, words/print – now stone, wood, clay, and occasional poetry. www.sylvia.spring.com.